

1609/5205

# PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

## ASSOCIATE SYNOD

RESPECTING

SOME PROPOSED ALTERATIONS

IN THE

FORMULA OF QUESTIONS

PUT

PROBATIONERS AT THEIR LICENSE,

AND TO

MINISTERS AND ELDERS AT THEIR ORDINATION,

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EDINBURGH:

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M, DCC, XCVI.

1609/5505.



# PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

## ASSOCIATE SYNOD, &c.

At the afternoon federunt of the Associate Synod on the 13th of May 1795, there was read a Representation and Petition, which had been transmitted, by the Committee of Overtures, from the Presbytery of Perth; of which the following is a copy :

*To the Revd. the MODERATOR and remanent MEMBERS  
of the ASSOCIATE SYNOD to meet at Edinburgh the  
12th day of May 1795.*

THE

### REPRESENTATION AND PETITION

OF THE SUBSCRIBER;

HUMBLY SHEWETH,

THAT a concern for the interests of pure and undefiled religion, and for the prosperity of the Ecclesiastical society with which he stands connected, prompts him to trouble this Reverend Court with a declaration of his mind concerning some of our religious sentiments, and to solicit a necessary reform.



It is a great mercy that the gospel is hitherto preserved among us in its purity. The doctrine of free grace reigning through the righteousness of Jesus Christ to the eternal life of men, in connection with all other fundamental truths revealed in the oracles of God, is, I hope, a doctrine cordially believed and explicitly preached by all the ministers belonging to this Synod; and, to their great honour, no Socinian, Arminian, or Neonomian errors, repugnant to it, have ever been tolerated by them. But we profess adherence not only to fundamental truth, but also to many other doctrines of inferior importance. Among these are the power of the civil magistrate in regard to religion, and the perpetual obligation of our public National Covenants upon posterity. The former is expressly asserted in the twenty-third Chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith; and the second question of our Formula, I apprehend, allows us not to differ from that confession in the smallest jot or title of doctrine contained in it; for the words of it are, "Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith,—and do you acknowledge the said Confession as the confession of your faith, &c.?"—The obligation of our Covenants is also the subject of the fourth question of said Formula; the words of which are, "Do you own and acknowledge the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant—and of the Solemn League and Covenant, &c.?" At our licence and ordination we solemnly professed to hold these principles; and this profession is renewed as oft as we concur in licensing and ordaining others; for we demand their assent to the questions of the Formula, as a test of their orthodoxy and of their holding the same principles with ourselves.

But it is a fact well known to us all, that, many years ago, a pamphlet was published against the Antiburghers, bearing



bearing the name of a late respectable member of this Court, and containing the following doctrines: "That  
 "all legal establishments of religion are improper and  
 "unwarrantable, and that our Covenants are obligatory  
 "upon posterity, materially considered, but have no o-  
 "bligation upon us entirely of the same nature with  
 "their obligation upon our fathers who swore them."

Since the publication of that pamphlet it has been read by many of us; and there is reason to think its principles have been adopted, not only by private Christians in our communion, but also by some members of Synod; which I mention, not to the discredit of any of them; for it is possible they imbibed such opinions without adverting to their inconsistency with our Confession of Faith and Formula, and I know that some young brethren, sensible of this inconsistency, have acted so honestly as to refuse an unlimited assent to the questions of the Formula, declaring themselves to be of these sentiments. The Synod also, with all the Presbyteries and members composing it, have always borne with such brethren, and we live in the closest fellowship with them, without making any distinction between them and other brethren; which tolerant spirit I do not absolutely condemn. But, since we are disposed to exercise such forbearance, and, since we all seem now sensible that the principles of the above mentioned pamphlet accord not with our Confession of Faith and Formula, I think it highly necessary, that the Formula be altered, and rendered more consistent with the sentiments of all our ministers, elders, probationers, and students. What pity is it that the smallest contrariety should exist between the sentiments of any of us and our solemn profession, when our principles and profession are in the main so consonant to the unerring standard of truth?—Doubtless the profession of a Church ought perfectly to harmonize

monize with her real principles, and nothing, either essential or circumstantial, should be professed, which is not fully believed.

May it, therefore, please this Reverend Synod to apply a proper remedy against the present corruption, and by that means relieve me and other brethren from the perplexity and uneasiness it gives us. That he who holdeth the seven stars in his right-hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, may be graciously present with this Reverend Court, to direct them in this momentous affair, and that truth and peace may ever prevail among the members of this Synod, is the prayer of their

Affectionate Brother,

and humble servant,

JOHN FRASER.

It was agreed, after deliberation, that the paper of which the above is a copy, should lie on the Synod's table till the meeting in September ensuing; that the members of Court might have it, in the interval, under their consideration.

On the 2d of September, the Synod entered on the consideration of it; and, after long reasoning, the following motion was put to the vote, and carried by a great majority: "That a Committee be appointed to review the questions in the Formula, between this and next meeting of Synod, and bring in an overture for uniting the members of this Court in their sentiments respecting the power given in our Confession of Faith to the civil magistrate in matters of religion, and re-  
specting



“specting the obligation of our National Covenants  
 “upon posterity; and that said Committee inform  
 “themselves of what scruples are entertained on these  
 “subjects:—and, in the mean time, that the Presbyte-  
 “ries be allowed to exercise forbearance at licence and  
 “ordination with respect to the articles above mention-  
 “ed; it being always understood that said forbearance  
 “shall not preclude this Synod from adhering to the For-  
 “mula as it now stands, if they shall judge proper.\*”

A Committee, consisting of thirty members was appointed at the next federunt of Synod, for preparing said overture, and ordered to meet for this purpose at Edinburgh, in Bristo Session-house, on the first Tuesday of October ensuing; seven to be a quorum, with power to adjourn as the business might require. At a subsequent federunt, the Committee was enlarged to thirty-two members, and the time of meeting altered to the 3d Tuesday of October.

At the meeting of Synod on the 27th of April, 1796, the report of said Committee was called for; when it appeared by their minutes which were laid on the table that twenty-three members of the Committee had obeyed the Synod's appointment, and that they had employed two days on the business committed to them. It appeared also, that they had agreed to overture to the Synod to pass an Act of Forbearance; the tenor of which they proposed should be as follows:

#### ACT OF FORBEARANCE.

“THE Associate Synod hereby declare their attach-  
 “ment to the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of  
 “Faith, and Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, which  
 “were

\* Those who voted in the minority agreed to the first part of the above motion, but voted that the latter part of it from the words, “and in the mean time,” should be left out.

“ were adopted by the General Assembly of the Church  
 “ of Scotland in the years 1647 and 1648: At the  
 “ same time hereby declaring, That, though they wish  
 “ to fear God and honour the King, and consider sub-  
 “ jection to the powers that are as an important duty  
 “ incumbent on all men; yet, as the power, respecting  
 “ religion, ascribed to the civil magistrate in said Con-  
 “ fession and Larger Catechism, as also in the National  
 “ Covenant of Scotland, and in the the Solemn League  
 “ and Covenant, has been, and still is, matter of doubt-  
 “ ful disputation among good and faithful men, the  
 “ Synod no longer make it a term of Ministerial or  
 “ Christian communion, but will exercise forbearance  
 “ with brethren, whatever their sentiments be on this  
 “ article; and they hereby declare, that the assent of  
 “ probationers at their licence, and of ministers and el-  
 “ ders at their ordination, to the second question of the  
 “ Formula, is not in future to be considered as an ac-  
 “ knowledgment of said power.”

It appeared likewise, that they had agreed to over-  
 ture to the Synod a variety of alterations in the For-  
 mula, as will be seen by a comparison of the Formula,  
 as it runs at present, which is here subjoined in the first  
 column, with the Formula, with said proposed altera-  
 tions, as subjoined in the second column.

#### OLD FORMULA.

*Ques. 1.* Do you be-  
 lieve the scriptures of the  
 Old and New Testament  
 to be the word of God, and  
 only rule of faith and man-  
 ners?

*Ques. 2.* Do you fin-  
 cerely own and believe the  
 whole

#### NEW FORMULA.

*Ques. 1.* Do you believe  
 the scriptures of the Old  
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 manners?

*Ques. 2.* “ Do you fin-  
 cerely own and believe the  
 whole



## OLD FORMULA.

whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, compiled by the Assembly of Divines that met at Westminster, with commissioners from the Church of Scotland, as the said Confession and Catechisms were received and approved by the Acts of the General Assembly, 1647 and 1648, to be founded on the word of God? And do you acknowledge that said Confession and Catechisms are the confession of your faith; and that you resolve, through divine grace, firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine contained in said Confession and Catechisms, and to assert, maintain, and defend it, to the utmost of your power, against all errors and opinions contrary to it? "

¶ Ques. 3.

\* The Act of Forbearance, inserted above.

† Those who voted in the minority in the Committee, voted for an explanation of the doctrine of the Confession and Covenants, on the subject of the magistrate's power *circa sacra*.

## NEW FORMULA.

whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, compiled by the Assembly of Divines that met at Westminster, with commissioners from the Church of Scotland; as the said Confession and Catechisms were received and approved by the Act of the Associate Synod 17 \*, to be founded on the word of God? And do you acknowledge that said Confession and Catechisms are the confession of your faith; and that you resolve, through divine grace, firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine contained in said Confession and Catechisms, and to assert, maintain, and defend it, to the utmost of your power, against all errors and opinions contrary to it? † "

¶ Ques. 3.

## OLD FORMULA.

*Quest. 3.* Are you persuaded that the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone King and Head of his Church, hath therein appointed a particular form of government and discipline, distinct from, and not subordinate to the civil government; and, that Presbyterial government, without any superiority of office above a teaching Presbyter, in a due subordination of Church Judicatories, as of Kirk-Sessions to Presbyteries, and of Presbyteries to Synods, is the only form of government delivered and appointed by the Lord Christ in his word, to continue unalterable till the end of the world? And do you promise to submit to the said government and discipline, and never directly or indirectly to endeavour the prejudice or subversion of it, but to maintain, support, and defend it, in your station, all the days of your life, together with the purity of worship received and practised in this Church of Scot-

## NEW FORMULA.

*Quest. 3.* " Are you persuaded that the Lord Jesus Christ the alone King and Head of his Church, hath therein appointed a particular form of government and discipline, distinct from, and not subordinate to the civil government; and that Presbyterial government, without any superiority of office above a teaching Presbyter, in a due subordination of Church Judicatories, as of Kirk-Sessions to Presbyteries, and of Presbyteries to Synods, is the only form of government delivered and appointed by the Lord Christ in his word, to continue unalterable till the end of the world? And do you resolve to submit to the said government and discipline, and never directly or indirectly to endeavour the prejudice or subversion of it, but to maintain, support, and defend it in your station, all the days of your life, together with the purity of worship received and practised in this Church, against



## OLD FORMULA.

Scotland, against all Erastian, Prelatic, Independent, Sectarian, and other tenets or forms of government, discipline, or worship, contrary thereto?

*Ques. 4.* Do you acknowledge the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant of Scotland, particularly as explained in 1638, to abjure Prelacy and the five articles of Perth; and of the Solemn League and Covenant? And do you acknowledge that public covenanting is a moral duty under the New Testament dispensation, to be performed when God in his providence calls to it?

*Ques. 5.* Do you approve of the Act, Declaration, and Testimony, published by the Associate Presbytery, and maintained by the Associate Synod, for the doc-

## NEW FORMULA.

gainst all Erastian, Prelatic, Independent, Sectarian, and other tenets or forms of government, discipline, or worship, contrary thereto?"

*Ques. 4.* "Do you, with the limitations specified in the Act of the Associate Synod, 17 , approve of the Covenants, National, and Solemn League, as a solemn engagement, on the part of our fathers, to cleave to the truths of Christ, and to hand them down to succeeding generations? And do you acknowledge that, in virtue of these covenants, an additional guilt will be contracted by the present and future generations, if they shall renounce these reformation principles?" \*

*Ques. 5.* "Do you approve of the Act, Declaration, and Testimony, published by the Associate Presbytery, and maintained by the Associate Synod, for

\* Those who voted in the minority in the Committee, voted for the insertion of these words, "As far as these Covenants respect a solemn engagement of adherence unto all the truths and ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, as contained in our Confession and Catechisms," immediately after the words, "Solemn League and Covenant," in the Old Formula.

## OLD FORMULA.

doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the house of God, as a necessary and seasonable appearance for reformation in a state of secession from the judicatories of the established church? And do you, through grace, resolve to prosecute the ends of said Testimony by maintaining and defending the truths of God therein asserted, in opposition to every contrary error and corruption; and particularly those errors that were vented by Professors Simpson and Campbell?

*Ques. 6.* Do you promise that you will submit yourself willingly and humbly, in the spirit of meekness to the admonitions of the brethren of this Presbytery, agreeable to the word of God; and to be subject to them in the Lord, and to the other Presbyteries of the Association, and to the Associate Synod, as the Lord in his providence shall cast your lot? And do you promise that you will follow no divisive course from the Reformed and Covenanted Church

## NEW FORMULA.

for the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the house of God, consistently with the limitations mentioned in questions 2d and 4th, as a necessary and seasonable appearance for reformation in a state of secession from the judicatories of the established church? And do you, through grace, resolve to prosecute the ends of said Testimony, by maintaining and defending the truths of God therein asserted, in opposition to every contrary error and corruption?"

*Ques. 6.* "Do you resolve to submit yourself willingly and humbly in the spirit of meekness to the admonitions of the brethren of this Presbytery, agreeable to the word of God; and to be subject to them in the Lord, and to the other Presbyteries of the Association, and to the Associate Synod, as the Lord in his providence shall cast your lot? And do you resolve to follow no divisive course from this Church, either by falling in, with the defections of the



## OLD FORMULA.

Church of Scotland, either by falling in with the defections of the times, or giving yourself up to a detestable indifferency and neutrality in the foresaid covenanted cause; and this you promise, through grace, notwithstanding whatever trouble or persecution you may meet with, in essaying the faithful discharge of your duty herein?

*Ques. 7.* Are not zeal for the honour and glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire of being instrumental in edifying and saving souls, your great motives, and chief inducements, to enter into the function of the holy ministry; and not any selfish views, or worldly designs or interest?

*Ques. 8.* Have you used any undue methods, either by yourself or others, in procuring this call to the ministry?

*Ques. 9.* Do you engage, in the strength and grace of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, to rule well your own family, (if it please the Lord to give you one)

## NEW FORMULA.

the times, or giving yourself up to a detestable indifferency and neutrality in the cause of truth; and this you resolve, through grace, notwithstanding whatever trouble or persecution you may meet with, in essaying the faithful discharge of your duty herein?"

*Ques. 7.* "Are zeal for the honour and glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire of being instrumental in edifying and saving souls, so far as you know your own heart, your great motives, and chief inducements, to enter into the function of the holy ministry; and not any selfish views, or worldly designs, or interest?"

*Ques. 8.* "Have you used any undue methods, either by yourself or others, in procuring this call to the ministry?"

*Ques. 9.* "Do you resolve, in the strength and grace of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, to rule well your own family, (if it shall please the Lord to give

## OLD FORMULA.

one) and to live a holy and circumspect life, following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness? And do you engage, in the strength of of the same grace, faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully to discharge all the parts of the ministerial work to the edification of the body of Christ.

*Ques.* 10. Do you accept of and close with the call to be pastor of this Associate Congregation; and promise, through grace, to perform all the duties of a faithful minister of the gospel, among this people, in preaching the gospel among them, not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the purity and simplicity thereof, not ceasing to declare unto them the whole counsel of God; as also in catechising, exhorting from house to house, visiting the sick, and performing whatever other duties or means are incumbent on you from the word of God, as a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, for the convincing and reclaiming of sinners, and

## NEW FORMULA.

give you one) and to live a holy and circumspect life, following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness? And do you resolve, in the strength of the same grace, faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully to discharge all the parts of the ministerial work to the edification of the body of Christ?"

*Ques.* 10. "Do you accept of and close with the call to be pastor of this Associate Congregation; and resolve, through grace, to perform all the duties of a faithful minister of the gospel among this people, in preaching the gospel among them, not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the purity and simplicity thereof, not ceasing to declare unto them the whole counsel of God; as also in catechising, exhorting from house to house, visiting the sick, and performing whatever other duties or means are incumbent on you from the word of God, as a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, for the convincing and reclaiming of sinners, and



## OLD FORMULA.

and the edifying and building up the body of Christ?

*Quæst.* II. And all these things you promise and engage unto, through grace, as you shall be answerable at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints, and as you would desire to be found among that happy company at his glorious appearing?

## NEW FORMULA.

and the edifying and building up the body of Christ?"

*Quæst.* II. "And these resolutions you make, and these duties you engage to perform, through grace, as you shall be answerable at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints, and as you would desire to be found among that happy company at his glorious appearing?"

The Synod, after approving of the diligence of the Committee in the business which had been committed to them, agreed, at the afternoon federunt of said day, to delay giving judgment on the Overture of their Committee, till the meeting of Synod in Spring 1797; and appointed said Overture to be immediately printed, together with the Reverend Mr John Frazer's Representation and Petition; which gave rise to the business, and such other extracts from the minutes of Synod as might be necessary for laying the business completely before all concerned.

The temporary forbearance which had been allowed by the Synod, by their deed of the 2d of September 1795, having expired, the Synod proceeded to consider what should be substituted in the room of the 2d and 4th questions of the Formula, concerning which scruples are entertained, till the meeting in Spring 1797, when it is proposed that the Overture shall be discussed. And, after long reasoning, it was carried by a great majority, that, as an interim Formula, the 2d and 4th questions should be expressed as here subjoined.

*Quæst.* 2. "Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith,  
" Larger

" Larger and Shorter Catechisms, composed by the Af-  
 " sembly of Divines that met at Westminster, with  
 " Commissioners from the Church of Scotland, as said  
 " Confession and Catechisms were received and appro-  
 " ven by the General Assemblies, 1647, and 1648,  
 " to be founded in the word of God? And do you be-  
 " lieve that the power of the civil magistrate in matters  
 " of religion, mentioned in said Confession, should al-  
 " ways be understood in a sense consistent with the spi-  
 " ritual nature of Christ's kingdom, which is not of this  
 " world? And, in this view, do you receive said Con-  
 " fession and Catechisms as the confession of your faith;  
 " and do you resolve, through divine grace, firmly and  
 " constantly to adhere to the doctrine contained in said  
 " Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and to assert,  
 " maintain, and defend it, to the utmost of your pow-  
 " er, against all errors and opinions contrary to it?"

*Queſ. 4.* " Do you acknowledge the perpetual obli-  
 " gation of the National Covenant of Scotland, and of the  
 " Solemn League and Covenant, in so far as the matter  
 " of them is founded upon, and agreeable to the Holy  
 " Scriptures; without proving of the inforcement of  
 " these Covenants by civil pains and penalties? And do  
 " you believe that these Covenants are a solemn engage-  
 " ment of adherence to the truths and ordinances of  
 " Christ, contained in his word; and that additional  
 " guilt will be contracted by the present and future ge-  
 " nerations if they shall renounce these reformation prin-  
 " ciples? And do you believe that public covenanting  
 " is a duty, under the New Testament, to be perform-  
 " ed when God in his providence calls to it?"

It was farther agreed, that these interim questions  
 should be printed along with what precedes, that four  
 copies should be sent to every congregation, and that  
 the expence of the printing should be defrayed out of  
 the Synod's fund.

(Signed)

DAVID GREIG, *Syd. Clk.*





